

# *The Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000*

**PROJECT SUMMARY  
JULY 2002 REPORT**



## *Executive Summary*

The Legislature enacted the Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Act of 2000 (the Act) in response to the challenge of how to successfully integrate natural resource protection and conservation with the growing population and economic needs of the State. The Act identifies the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to implement the Tax Credit program designed to protect and conserve the natural resources of California.

The tax credit program provides a means to protect and conserve open space, agricultural lands, water, archaeological resources, wildlife habitat and State and local parks. Authorized through the provisions of Chapter 113, Statutes of 2000, \$100,000,000 in tax credits were made available to private landowners who donate (either in fee or easement) interests in qualified land and water.

This program provides an opportunity for landowners to reduce their State tax liability by making qualified donations to eligible State departments, local governmental entities and qualified nonprofit organizations for purposes of protecting natural and historical resources. In exchange for a qualified donation, landowners receive a tax credit of 55 percent of the appraised fair market value of the donated interest.

The Act became operational in March of 2001. Since that time, program applications and guidelines have been provided to over 1,000 people and organizations. In addition, a website has been established and extensive outreach efforts have been made to advertise the Tax Credit program.

The public continues to have a tremendous amount of interest in the tax credit program in California. The WCB has also received inquiries from states across the nation that are closely watching California's effort to implement this land protection and conservation effort.

Since the program became operational, the WCB has approved donations that have resulted in the permanent protection of 7,061 acres of park, open space, wildlife habitat, prime farmland, archaeological resources and 539 acre feet of water rights. One of the projects, the Carpenteria Bluffs Donation, was approved with conditions that were not met within a specified timeline, and the donation did not occur. That project has been included for informational purposes but has not been included in the totals. The appraised fair market value of the remaining donations total \$60.9 million, at a cost to the State (tax credits) of only \$33.5 million.

The program has been well received by landowners throughout the State. Large development companies as well as family farmers have taken advantage of the opportunity to benefit the environment and local economic development by donating land and receiving a tax credit. The distribution of tax credits among the various landowner donors range from \$20,350 to \$16,115,000.

A brief summary of projects approved by WCB is included. For a more detailed explanation of the projects, please contact Teri Muzik, Program Manager, at (916) 445-1716 for a copy of the minutes from the WCB meeting.

## APPROVED PROJECTS



### Mid-State Bank Donation, San Luis Obispo County

On May 18, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 20± acres to the Cambria Community Services District and a tax credit of \$1,284,250.00 to the landowner. The donated property is located in Cambria and will provide public access to the historic East-West Ranch and will protect critical habitat for a number of threatened or endangered species.



### Sacramento Prairie Vernal Pool Preserve, Sacramento County

On August 30, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 282± acres to the Sacramento Valley Open Space Conservancy and a tax credit of \$698,500.00 to the landowner. The donated property is located in southeastern Sacramento County and will protect critical vernal pool habitat and the endangered species found in the pools.



### Battle Creek Wildlife Area, Tehama County

On August 30, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved the bargain sale of 539± acre feet of water rights by the Department of Fish and Game and a tax credit of \$269,500.00 to the landowner. The Battle Creek Wildlife Area is located about six miles east of the town of Cottonwood. Purchase of these water rights will allow the Department of Fish and Game to maximize development and maintenance of riparian and wetland habitats in the Battle Creek Wildlife Area.





### Rasmussen Donation, Los Angeles County

On August 30, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 151± acres to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and a tax credit of \$2,882,000.00 to the landowner. The property is located in the City of Agoura Hills and has been designated a Significant Ecological Area by Los Angeles County for its oak savanna habitat. The property is adjacent to protected parklands and will provide public access to trails into the parklands to the north.



### Bixby Ranch Donation, Monterey County

On August 30, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 119± acres to the Trust for Public Land and a tax credit of \$2,970,000.00 to the landowner. The Bixby Ranch is located off Highway One, approximately 12 miles south of Carmel. Acquisition of this historic property provides scenic viewshed protection and public access to the Pacific Ocean and coastal mountains. The property will be transferred to the United States Forest Service for management as an addition to the Los Padres National Forest



### Eagle Ridge Conservation Easement, Calaveras County

On November 28, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of a conservation easement over 3,009± acres of wildlife habitat to the Department of Fish and Game and a tax credit of \$1,430,000.00 to the landowner. The property is located in north central Calaveras County about 12 miles east of San Andreas. The conservation easement will protect critical habitat for a variety of wildlife.



### Hart Ranch Donation, Lake County

On November 28, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 22± acres to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and a tax credit of \$20,350.00 to the landowner. The donated property is located near the community of Kelseyville and will allow DPR to expand the Clear Lake State Park. The property also contains Native American Pomo archeological sites and artifacts.



### Tuna Canyon Conservation Area, Los Angeles County

On November 28, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 1,016± acres to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and a tax credit of \$16,115,000.00 to the landowner. The donated property is located at the western boundary of the Topanga Canyon State Park and will connect other protected public parklands in the area.



### Carpenteria Bluffs Donation, Santa Barbara County

On November 28, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board conditionally approved the donation of 30± acres to the Trust for Public Land and a tax credit of \$7,314,477.00 to the landowner. The approval was conditional upon the landowner meeting several requirements prior to the donation being completed. The conditions were not met by the due dates and the transaction did not occur.





Tomales Bay State Park Donation,  
Marin County

On November 28, 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 92± acres to the California State Parks Foundation and a tax credit of \$651,750.00 to the landowner. The property is located in western Marin County along Tomales Bay. The property will be transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation as an expansion of the Tomales Bay State Park.



Joel McCrea Ranch Conservation Area  
(Donation), Ventura County

On February 27, 2002, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 58± acres to the Conejo Recreation and Park District and a tax credit of \$2,370,500.00 to the landowner. The property is located northwest of the City of Thousand Oaks. The property will protect significant open space and provide the public with park and recreational activities.



Madera Farmland Conservation Area  
(Donation), Madera County

On February 27, 2002, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved the bargain sale of an agricultural conservation easement over 116± acres of farmland to the American Farmland Trust and a tax credit of \$93,500.00 to the landowner. The property is located just west of the City of Madera. The conservation easement will protect productive farmland from future development.



### Rancho Dos Vistas, Santa Barbara County

On February 27, 2002, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of a conservation easement over 1,406± acres to the Land Trust of Santa Barbara and a tax credit of \$3,025,000.00 to the landowner. The property is located on the crest of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The conservation easement will restrict residential development in order to preserve important wildlife habitat, scenic, archeological and historic values of the site. The property will also provide an important wildlife corridor in the Santa Ynez Mountains.



### Madera Farmland Conservation Area, Phase II, Madera County

On May 23, 2002, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved the bargain sales of seven agricultural easements over 362± acres of farmland to the American Farmland Trust and tax credits totaling \$619,226.00 to the landowners. On February 27, 2002, the Board approved the first phase of agricultural easements in Madera County near the town of Madera. These conservation easements will protect productive farmland from future development.



### San Timoteo Canyon, Riverside County

On May 23, 2002, the Wildlife Conservation Board approved a donation of 438± acres to the Riverside Land Conservancy and a total of \$1,081,158.00 in tax credit for the landowners. The properties are located west of the City of Beaumont and southeast of Redlands in the San Timoteo Canyon. The donations will preserve critical habitat migration corridors and protect the watershed and surrounding hills and canyons that provide habitat to a variety of species. The property also contains many historic and archeologically significant resources and will allow expanded public access to existing trails in the area.